

WATER DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Water Department is to ensure public health and safety by providing a clean, safe, and reliable supply of water. We strive to serve the community in a courteous, efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable manner.

We monitor water quality and have had zero violations of drinking water standards. We protect the local watersheds our drinking water comes from and the operation of the Loch Lomond Recreation Area. In addition to meeting the daily needs of our customers, the department is developing long-term solutions and collaborative partnerships with neighboring water agencies.



Our Responsibilities Include:

- ✔ Collection of Water
- ✔ Water Treatment
- ✔ Water Storage
- ✔ Production of Drinking Water
- ✔ Water Distribution
- ✔ Monitoring of Drinking Water

Contact Us:

- 📞 831-420-5200
- 🌐 <https://www.santacruzca.gov/Government/City-Departments/Water-Department>
- 📍 212 Locust St., Santa Cruz

💧 *Loch Lomond Recreation Area*
100 Loch Lomond Way, Felton

💧 *Water Administration, Water Engineering, and
Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities (SCMU)*
212 Locust St., Santa Cruz

Core Services

The Water Department ensures public health and safety by providing clean, safe, and reliable drinking water to the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Staff perform daily utility, land, and natural resource management activities needed to provide water to nearly 100,000 customers in Santa Cruz and several other parts of the county. In addition to these daily duties, the department is undergoing a major reinvestment in water infrastructure and water supply augmentation initiatives to adapt to climate change and ensure the community continues to receive clean, safe, and reliable drinking water. This includes upgrades to the water treatment plant, improvements to the Loch Lomond dam, the replacement of all system meters, and projects to augment our local water supply. To perform this work, the Water Department is organized into four areas: Operations; Engineering; Customer Service; and Administration.

Operations - The Operations group is responsible for managing the watersheds; collecting, treating, and testing untreated and treated water; and storing and distributing treated water to our customers. The group includes the following sections: Water Resources; Water Production; Water Quality Control (laboratory); Distribution; and the Water Recreation Facility (Loch Lomond Reservoir).

- The Water Resources Management section is responsible for drinking water source protection,

environmental regulatory compliance, and general natural resource management. The section coordinates environmental projects related to water rights, water supply, habitat conservation, and environmental resource protection.

- The Water Production section is responsible for production, operation, and maintenance of water storage, diversion, collection, pumping, and treatment facilities from all sources throughout the system. This 24/7 work is made more challenging with the Concrete Tank Replacement project underway and planned upgrades to the Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant soon. Despite the challenges presented, staff continue to produce millions of gallons of water for customers daily.
- The Water Quality Control (laboratory) section performs all water quality testing and oversees matters pertaining to water quality control to maintain compliance with State and Federal standards and for planning for future treatment needs.
- The Water Distribution section is responsible for the maintenance and operation of all transmission mains, distribution mains, service lines, and hydrants in the service area. Distribution staff also replace significant segments of distribution mains as part of the Capital Investment Program (CIP).

- The Water Recreation Facility section operates and maintains Loch Lomond Recreation Area. This section is also responsible for patrolling watershed property and protecting source water quality. Watershed Rangers also provide in-person watershed education programs for local elementary school children at Loch Lomond.

Engineering - The Water Engineering section is composed of two main functions: Engineering and Utility and Environmental Planning.

- The Water Engineering section provides engineering, planning, project design, and construction management necessary for water facilities, as well as evaluation and installation of water-saving technologies. The section keeps current with new technologies and water quality issues, remaining sensitive to mitigation of environmental impacts; reviews all requests for water services; maintains record of facilities, installations, and maps; and oversees the Backflow Prevention Program. In 2017, the department embarked on an ambitious system-wide reinvestment with the Engineering section at the helm. This program includes the replacement of large storage tanks, pipelines, and the exploration of increasing storage in underground aquifers in partnership with neighboring agencies.
- The Utility and Environmental Planning group helps the department adequately plan for the impacts of climate change and building a resilient water system. Foundational documents such as the Urban Water Management Plan guide future projects by ensuring there are adequate water supplies. In addition, there are numerous Federal, State, and local environmental laws the department must comply with to complete the planned infrastructure investments in the water system.

Customer Service - The Customer Service group consists of three sections: Customer Service; the Meter Shop; and Customer Assistance. These three sections interface with the public frequently and strive to provide excellent customer service.

- The Customer Service section (Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities – SCMU) provides customer service for water, sewer, refuse, and recycling services to the residents and businesses of the City of Santa Cruz, plus water services to other parts of the county. This section manages utility accounts and billing, processes opening and closing of accounts, and provides service in response to customer requests.
- The Meter Shop section is responsible for reading, inspecting, installing, maintaining, and replacing water meters in the service area. As part of a large capital project, all water meters in the service area are being replaced. The new meters will give water customers more timely and accurate usage information as well as improve the billing process.

- The Customer Assistance section helps customers resolve leaks and implements a water affordability program for low-income households.

Administration - The Water Administration section coordinates and manages department business by focusing on the following operational areas: human resources, finances, community relations, safety, and

regulatory compliance. Administration is responsible for maintaining a rate structure that reflects cost-of-service, solicits Federal, State, and other funds to finance the department's CIP, and ensures adequate financial reserves. This section also facilitates communication and interaction with the Water Commission, City Council, City Manager's Office, and regulatory agencies.

FY 2026 Accomplishments

FY 2026 Accomplishments	<i>Fiscal Sustainability and Transparency</i>	<i>Strong Businesses and Vibrant Downtown</i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Homelessness Response</i>	<i>Public Safety and Community Well-Being</i>	<i>Natural and Built Infrastructure</i>	<i>Thriving Organization</i>
Finalized a strategic re-prioritization of the Capital Investment Program and initiated a rate study to support long range financial planning 🏛️	X						X
Reached substantial completion on large capital projects: Intertie 1 with Scotts Valley Water District and the Concrete Tanks Replacement Project at the Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant ❤️						X	
Received approval for the Federal Anadromous Salmonid Habitat Conservation Plan (ASHCP) and Santa Cruz Water Rights Project						X	
Maintained 100% compliance with all state and federal drinking water standards and earned a Certificate of Excellence for achieving 100% on the annual performance testing study ❤️						X	
Completed Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) communications system upgrade						X	
Completed 1,155 feet linear feet of main replacement; repaired or replaced over 65 leaking service lines, 26 service lines, 9 valve gates and one new fire hydrant						X	
Began implementation of new utility billing system and expanded the Utility Customer Assistance Program to low-income multi-family customers; provided approximately \$300k in direct assistance 🏛️	X					X	X

FY 2026 Accomplishments	<i>Fiscal Sustainability and Transparency</i>	<i>Strong Businesses and Vibrant Downtown</i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Homelessness Response</i>	<i>Public Safety and Community Well-Being</i>	<i>Natural and Built Infrastructure</i>	<i>Thriving Organization</i>
Continued progress toward Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) compliance by refining and validating our service line inventory 📍						X	
Completed security upgrades at production facilities which resulted in a significant reduction or elimination of trespassing on key sites and added improved safety equipment at a number of water system sites						X	
Completed the required 5-year update to the Risk and Resilience Assessment and Emergency Response Plan	X					X	X
Worked collaboratively with HR and other City departments to implement new job classifications that more accurately represent the work of the Water Department							X
Maintained water quality at Loch Lomond by applying the first nutrient-mitigation alum application to manage naturally occurring algae, improve water clarity and maintain ecosystem health 🌳 ❤️						X	
Implemented the Department communications plan including expanding translation into Spanish to reach all customers 🗣️							X



FY 2027 Goals

FY 2027 Goals	<i>Fiscal Sustainability and Transparency</i>	<i>Strong Businesses and Vibrant Downtown</i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Homelessness Response</i>	<i>Public Safety and Community Well-Being</i>	<i>Natural and Built Infrastructure</i>	<i>Thriving Organization</i>
Successfully complete the Cost of Service and rate study, update the Long-Range Financial Plan, and implement new rates 🏛️	X					X	X
Initiate construction activities for the Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant Facilities Improvement Project (FIP) 🌳💖						X	
Complete University Tank No. 4 Replacement Project and Newell Creek Pipeline - Felton/Graham Hill 🌳💖						X	
Complete Beltz 12 Upgrades for ASR 🌳💖						X	
Continue Lead Service Line field verification to reduce unknown service line materials to nearly zero 🌳💖						X	
Initiate watershed sanitary survey and complete first stage of forest health work on the Newell Creek property 🌳						X	
Complete main replacement projects at critical segments in the water distribution system 🌳💖						X	
Conduct department-wide training and tabletop exercises to ensure readiness and effective emergency response coordination 💖							X
Successful move of staff and equipment from Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant to the Bay Street Reservoir site for the Facilities Improvement Project							X
Continue to respond to and repair all reported leaks in a timely and professional manner regardless of the time of day or night 💖						X	

Workload Indicators

Workload Indicators	Strategic Plan Focus Area	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Estimate	FY 2027 Goal
Drinking water consumed (billions of gallons)	Natural and Built Infrastructure	2.24	2.33	2.40	2.30	2.40
# of phone calls, emails, and lobby visits handled by Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities' Customer Service Unit 🌳 ⚖️ ❤️	Thriving Organization	57,141	55,099	56,788	50,000	50,000
Amount of dollars of new construction investments 🌳 ⚖️ ❤️	Fiscal Sustainability and Transparency, Natural and Built Infrastructure	\$49.0M	\$45.3M	\$27.4M	\$51.5M	\$48.0M
Acres of watershed lands protected 🌳	Natural and Built Infrastructure	22,873	22,873	22,873	22,873	22,873
Value of water system infrastructure maintained to ensure the safe delivery of drinking water 🌳	Natural and Built Infrastructure	\$1B	\$1B	\$1B	\$1B	\$1.1B

Performance Measures

Performance Measures	Strategic Plan Focus Area	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Estimate	FY 2027 Goal
Compliance with drinking water standards 🌳 ⚖️ ❤️	Natural and Built Infrastructure	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
# of workers comp claims requiring employee absence greater than 30 days	Thriving Organization	1	0	0	0	0
Maintain excellent bond ratings to ensure favorable borrowing rates thereby reducing cost to customers ⚖️	Fiscal Sustainability and Transparency; Thriving Organization	AA-/A-	AA-/A-	AA-/A-	AA-/A-	AA-/A-
% of customer bills paid within 60 days	Fiscal Sustainability and Transparency	94%	97%	95%	97%	97%

Staffing

Positions	FY 2024 Amended*	FY 2025 Amended*	FY 2026 Amended*	FY 2027 Adopted	FY 2027 Change
Administrative Assistant I/II	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Administrative Assistant III	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	-
Administrative Assistant III - Limited Term	-	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Administrative Services Supervisor	-	-	1.00	1.00	-
Assistant Engineer I/II	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	-
Associate Planner I/II	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	-
Associate Professional Engineer	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	-
Chief Ranger	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Customer Service Manager	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Deputy Water Director/Engineering Mgr	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Deputy Water Director/Operations Mgr	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Director of Water Department	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Engineering Associate	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	-
Engineering Technician	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-
Environmental Microbiologist I/II/III	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Environmental Programs Analyst I/II	3.00	1.00	1.00	-	(1.00)
Laboratory Technician	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Management Analyst	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-
Principal Management Analyst	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Principal Planner	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Program Analyst	-	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Ranger I/II	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-
Ranger Assistant	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	-
Senior Electrician	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Senior Professional Engineer	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Senior Ranger	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Senior Water Distribution Operator	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	-
Superintendent of Water Treatment and Production	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Superintendent of Water Distribution	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Utility Account Specialist	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	-
Utility Maintenance Technician	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	-
Utility Service Field Technician I/II	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Utility Service Representative I/II	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	-
Utility Service Representative I/II - Limited Term	-	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Utility Supervisor	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-

FY 2027 Budget

Positions	FY 2024 Amended*	FY 2025 Amended*	FY 2026 Amended*	FY 2027 Adopted	FY 2027 Change
Water Chief Financial Officer/Assistant Finance Director	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Distribution Crew Leader III/IV	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	-
Water Distribution Operator II/III	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	-
Water Distribution Sup V Chief Distribution Operator	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Facilities Electrical/Instr Tech II/III	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Water Facilities Field Supervisor	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Facilities Mechanical Tech II/III	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Water Facilities Mechanical Supervisor	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Meter Specialist I/II	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-
Water Meter Specialist Lead	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Meter Supervisor	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Meter Technician	1.00	1.00	-	-	-
Water Quality Chemist I/II/III	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	-
Water Quality Manager	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Resources Analyst	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	-
Water Resources Supervisor	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water SCADA Analyst	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Treatment Operator II/III/IV	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	-
Water Treatment OIT II/III/IV	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Water Treatment Supervisor (Lead)	-	-	-	1.00	1.00
Water Treatment Supervisor IV/V-Chief Plant Operator	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Watershed Compliance Manager	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-
Total	123.25	128.25	127.25	127.25	-

* "Amended" refers to the FTE count as of the adopted budget of the indicated fiscal year, plus any adjustments authorized by City Council within the course of the year

Budget Summary - Water

		Fiscal Year 2026			Fiscal Year 2027 Adopted*	
		Fiscal Year 2025 Actuals*	Adopted Budget*	Amended Budget*		Year-End Estimate*
EXPENDITURES BY CHARACTER:						
Personnel Services		18,174,933	20,429,758	20,773,330	19,772,722	22,224,514
Services, Supplies, and Other Charges		18,086,966	21,425,138	22,349,835	20,699,732	23,699,769
Capital Outlay		403,926	1,485,371	1,729,931	1,721,440	1,034,000
Debt Service		6,679,959	12,340,263	18,740,263	9,864,653	10,774,108
Total Expenditures		43,345,784	55,680,530	63,593,359	52,058,547	57,732,391
EXPENDITURES BY ACTIVITY:						
Water Administration	7101	7,890,899	9,661,246	9,863,950	9,753,481	10,362,033
Water Engineering	7102	3,272,190	4,722,995	4,816,006	3,788,843	4,988,706
Water Customer Services	7103	3,240,628	3,417,890	3,674,988	3,717,524	3,820,757
Water Customer Assistance	7104	561,265	551,937	515,932	539,205	395,933
Water Resources	7105	1,994,409	2,779,639	3,260,937	2,930,062	3,246,453
Water Production	7106	8,720,597	9,649,855	10,016,200	9,894,616	10,979,720
Water Quality	7107	2,511,992	2,612,942	2,637,473	2,567,802	2,726,896
Water Distribution	7108	5,283,212	6,609,297	6,673,062	6,481,393	6,582,215
Water Recreation	7109	1,538,810	1,599,524	1,616,320	1,249,918	1,703,648
Water Operations	7110	636,013	598,315	627,560	657,521	732,866
Water Meter Shop	7113	1,094,835	1,311,627	1,325,668	883,528	1,419,056
Water Debt Service	7140	6,664,959	12,165,263	18,565,263	9,594,653	10,774,108
<i>Subtotal Other Funds</i>		43,409,808	55,680,530	63,593,359	52,058,547	57,732,391
Total Expenditures		43,409,808	55,680,530	63,593,359	52,058,547	57,732,391
RESOURCES BY FUND:						
Technology Surcharge	295	6,833	5,200	7,200	10,000	10,300
Water	711	55,537,320	59,040,557	59,042,572	56,612,668	61,325,283
Water Rate Stabilization Fund	713	3,099,884	3,301,080	3,301,080	2,987,048	3,000,000
Water System Development Fees Fund	715	1,839,023	1,240,000	1,240,000	2,715,000	1,315,000
Total Resources		60,483,060	63,586,837	63,590,852	62,324,716	65,650,583
NET OPERATING COST:		17,073,252	7,906,307	(2,507)	10,266,169	7,918,192
TOTAL AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL:		FY 2025 128.25	FY 2026 127.25	FY 2027 127.25		

*Sums may have discrepancies due to rounding

Organization Chart

